



JANUARY 2011

Jailhouse Rock

Coluccio Transitions from Touring Musician to Department of Corrections Educator

Dante Coluccio had a choice between Bermuda and the Garden State Youth Correctional Facility. He picked the prison.

Seriously.

Back in 1998, Coluccio was a touring musician who routinely spent months at a time on the road. He had been home in New Jersey for a brief visit, fully aware that his next project not only would take him away from the area, but it would require him to relocate in Bermuda.

"I'd spent most of the previous 13 years traveling," said Coluccio, a Yardville native who graduated from Hamilton West High School in 1982. "By then, I had a son, and frankly, I didn't want to be on the road anymore."

So when he heard about a job opening for a music instructor at Garden State, he was more than a little bit interested.

"I got called in for an interview, and I eventually got the job," Coluccio related. "I started my first music class on March 3, 1998. I'd been scheduled to arrive in Bermuda on March 4."

His path to employment with the New Jersey Department of Corrections could hardly



Dante Coluccio went to work at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility one day before he was scheduled to relocate in Bermuda.

Photo by Scott Franks

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have been less conventional. Coluccio first performed as a bass guitar player with Danny and the Juniors, a '50s group whose best known songs included "At the Hop" and "Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay." He subsequently played the bass with numerous acts from that era, among them the Five Satins ("In the Still of the Night"), the Coasters ("Yakety Yak") and the Duprees ("You Belong to Me"). He also lent his talents to the iconic pop band Kool and The Gang, whose 1980 recording of "Celebration" received international acclaim.

From there, he was recruited to play trombone and bass on a tour sponsored by Miller Genuine Draft. Around that time, he also began directing various bands as either a bass or keyboard player. There was a stint as a free-lance musician in Atlantic City, during which he played with acts ranging from doo-wop groups to big-band legend Louis Prima to rockers Ozzy Osborne and Dave Mason. And there were more tours, most notably a 1990 gig with a popular band out of the Philadelphia area called The Rockets, which regularly attracted audiences in excess of 10,000.

"I used to play pretty much every night of the week," Coluccio recalled.

"Then, if a band went out on the road, you might be living out of a suitcase for three or four months, maybe longer. With a lot of those tours, you'd have a sound check in the middle of the day or you might have to do spots on local radio stations in whatever town you were in. You'd go to different places, but oftentimes, you barely had an opportunity to experience them. It got to be the same thing, day after day. I was ready to make a change."

But first, there was a duo to be formed. The duo began to gain a following, and when it invented a game called "Rock and Roll Bingo," it attracted a corporate sponsorship from Bicardi. The sponsors planned a tour and decided the tour would be based in Bermuda.

Shortly thereafter, Coluccio became a member of the education staff at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility. He also has lent his services to Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility and Mid-State Correctional Facility Annex on occasion.

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"My only concern about this job had nothing to do with working in a prison," he said. "I was worried about showing up for work at 8 o'clock in the morning, since that would be something that was new to me. I remember practicing waking up early for a week before my start date. Fortunately, it turned out not to be a problem."

For Coluccio, the transition from musician to music teacher proved to be seamless. He teaches two classes each day – a total of between 20 and 25 students.

"We have trumpets, trombones, saxophones, flutes, clarinets, guitars, bass and keyboards," he began. "We teach inmates how to play any and every one of those instruments. First, they learn to play their instruments. Next, they learn to play as a band. Then, they learn how to perform. For example, they're taught that you can't put a guitar down and make a loud noise if someone is speaking, or someone else is playing. Eventually, my students perform during graduations.

"I explain to them that knowledge of music theory can provide the ability to figure out instruments much better than if you simply picked up an instrument and looked at it," continued Coluccio, who remains active in the local music scene and hopes to open a music school before the end of 2010. "There is a basic understanding of music that can be applied to instruments, and that's what I teach. I can teach a guy piano for two hours, then hand him a guitar and ask him to show me where the notes are. If he's been paying attention, he can do that.

"In terms of how far students can progress, it's up to them. I can teach them to write music or to program synthesizers. I can teach them how to audition for jobs and how to find work in the music industry."

More than anything, Coluccio tries to impart on his students a sense of responsibility.

"I provide the music instruction, and through that, they learn to become men," he said. "Hopefully, they take a lot more away from this class than just music. You could see the maturity process. They begin to understand that if one person acts inappropriately, the entire group feels the impact. They learn that what they do truly matters. When a guy tells me, 'You helped me understand how I count in society,' that's the biggest thank you I can get."



An Artist Through and Through

Teacher of the Year Shares Passion of Art

She worked in sales. She even worked as a road construction laborer. Yet, Deardra Thompson always returned to her first love: teaching.

"I knew I could teach, but I also wanted to see what else I could do," related Thompson, an art teacher of four years at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility. "So I tried different things, but I always came back to education."

The 2010 New Jersey Correctional Education Association (NJCEA) Teacher of the Year has been in the education field for close to 20 years. Her teaching experience includes high school remedial education and elementary education – including English and, of course, art.

"I've always loved art," Thompson reflected. "All I've ever wanted to do was teach art."

Educated in Trenton, Thompson's curiosity in art was peaked in her fifth-grade art class. However, it was in junior high and high schools that art took on new meaning for her.

"I stepped into Mrs. Belt's art class, and I was in love," Thompson said. "I spent all of my time in there. Then I went to high school, and I worked with Mr. Overton. He introduced me to art and the life behind art. It's one thing for a teacher to teach you something, but it's another thing for that teacher to show you where it fits into your life, and that's what he did."



Deardra Thompson with her 2010 Teacher of the Year award from the New Jersey Correctional Education Association.

Following high school, Thompson pursued and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in interior design from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Years later, she would go on to earn her teaching certificate from Trenton State College, now known as the College of New Jersey. With a spirit for adventure, Thompson also spent a number of years living in places like Denver, Colorado, and Anchorage, Alaska.

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Prior to arriving at Garden State, Thompson taught for 12 years in the Burlington City school system, where, on an elementary level, she instructed English and then later, art.

When a friend told her about an art teacher opening at Garden State, Thompson reluctantly applied, although she could not fathom working in a correctional setting. Several months later, she stepped into her classroom and an altogether different educational setting than that to which she had been accustomed.

"When I walked in the door, I thought, 'This is where I know I need to be,' " Thompson remembered. "My jaw dropped. I thought, 'Oh my goodness, what is going on here? Look at this. I can't believe what these people can do.' When I saw the art-work being done, I was just blown away. I've been amazed ever since."

A typical day for Thompson consists of instructing older inmates, who are enrolled in a 120-hour certificate program, in the morning; and in the afternoon, inmates under 21 years of age, who are mandated by the state to attend school. Each class – about 2 ½ hours in length – has 12 to 15 students and meets five days a week.

Compared to her morning students, who typically spend time on a waiting list before getting into the certificate program, Thompson's afternoon art class is a bit more challenging, as those students are not necessarily there by choice.

"A lot of these guys never really thought about art," noted Thompson. "It wasn't a possibility out in the real world. For them, art is for kids and immature males. It's not macho.

"I get them to start thinking about what art is," she continued. "I let them know that art is everything – art is your hair, the clothes you wear, the chair you're sitting in and the table you're leaning on. Somebody designed it. Art has always been around. I try to get them to feel a little bit about art. I tell them, 'I'm not expecting you to fall in love with it, I just want you to understand that maybe someday when a Picasso goes by, you can say, 'I know that one,' and maybe you'll remember something of what I tried to teach you.' I'm trying to change their stereotypical opinion

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about what art is and who does art.”

Thompson does not require her students to do projects or try techniques that either she hasn't done herself or is not willing to try. Outside of Garden State, acrylic painting classes, art conventions and museum openings are just a few activities that keep Thompson immersed in the field she so loves.

“When I take a class, I come in here, and I make them do what I've learned,” she said. “I've always felt, as an educator, that it is important for me to hone in on my skills constantly. If I don't do it myself, how can I tell somebody else to do it or show somebody else how to do it? Education is about growing and constantly learning. If I can't show my students that education never ends, how can I teach them? I try to keep up on what's going on. I'm always trying to find something new. That's the way I've learned how to teach.”

Thompson often finds creative methods of incorporating other academic disciplines into her art classes.

“When I was in public school, I always tied my art in with an academic – with a history teacher or a math teacher,” Thompson related. “Art should not be a separate entity, because it is part of everyday life. It also encourages and helps those students who are more visual and need something they can put their hands on.

“In my classes now, I try to tie in poetry from another class, and I encourage students to bring their poetry in here and do manuscripts,” she noted. “I am also trying to do an art project with Mr. Chris Cramer, the welding teacher who nominated me for the Teacher of the Year award, and his students.”

Speaking of her NJCEA award, Thompson reflected, “I read what Mr. Cramer wrote about me, and I was honored. I was very surprised when my name was called. Getting awards is not what I'm after, though. The sparkle in the eyes of my students when they finish something that they really didn't think they could do – that's my reward. Or someday seeing their name out there in a positive light and going, ‘Wow, he made it on the right side.’ I know that just because their destiny is here right now, it doesn't have to stay that way.

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"Just to know, like Mr. Overton [high school art teacher], I'm paying it forward," she added. "He gave it to me, and now I'm passing it to my students. I want them, as their payment to me, to pass it on to someone else. That's all I'm after."



Dig It!

Bayside State Prison Officer Locates Fossil Remains of Tyrannosaurus Rex

Joseph Camburn vividly remembers reading a book about dinosaur hunters way back in fourth grade.

"The topic fascinated me," said Camburn, now 58 and a senior correction officer at Bayside State Prison. "It still does."

Camburn is so fascinated, in fact, that he has been an amateur fossil hunter for more than two decades. Fortunately for him, his wife, Sandra, shares his interest in fossil hunting, and when the two embark on expeditions, they do so together. Another travel partner on these periodic expeditions is David Parris, curator of natural history at the New Jersey State Museum.

Fast forward to 2007, when the traveling party during an expedition to Montana included the Camburns, David Parris, and Parris' son, Daniel. Camburn and his colleagues were about to discover the paleontologic equivalent of gold.

"We were driving this road, and I noticed a formation that I wanted to take a closer look at," Camburn related. "A few days later, I returned with a shovel, and I started to climb, looking for fossil remains. Eventually, I saw three layered yellow strips that I recognized to be volcanic ash fall. I walked along the strips, and on one of them, I noticed bones sticking out. I immediately called David to help determine exactly what I'd found."

What he'd found was a shoulder blade and humerus (upper arm bone) of a Tyrannosaurus Rex, the legendary "tyrant lizard king"



Joseph Camburn, shown during an expedition in Carbon County, Montana, is flanked by students Jill Patton (left) and Jennifer Morgan. The three are working at the site where Camburn had discovered Tyrannosaurus Rex bones.

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of dinosaurs. "At the time," Camburn said, "I recall thinking that this is as good as it gets."

The T-Rex, which roamed throughout what is now western North America more than 65 million years ago, has become a pop culture fixture thanks to such motion pictures as "Dinosaur!" and "Jurassic Park." However, less than five dozen specimens are known to have been found.

A return trip to the excavation site a year later yielded additional T-Rex bones as well as 10 teeth, the largest of which is nearly a foot long.

"It's hard not to recognize a Tyrannosaurus Rex tooth," Parris noted. "Up to that point, we had our suspicions as to what we'd found, but the teeth confirmed it."

Although the skeletal remains technically are the property of the U.S. Department of the Interior, they are on indefinite loan to the New Jersey State Museum.

"Our ultimate goal is to recover a complete skeleton," said Parris, who has developed a college course that teaches students the art of fossil hunting. "It can be a drawn-out process, but that's okay. The best sites are often the ones you can gradually develop."

Parris looks forward to continuing to develop the site with the Camburns.

"Joe and Sandra work so well together," he said. "They're both strong, capable diggers who combine the physical element with an intellectual approach. Joe is an especially strong excavator, and Sandra records the data without missing a detail. They're a perfect team."

Since Camburn is both accomplished and passionate when it comes to fossil hunting, it is impossible not to wonder if his career choice should have

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been paleontology instead of corrections.

"I don't think I'm bright enough" to be a paleontologist, joked Camburn, who has been employed at Bayside since 1990, originally as an electrician and then as a member of the custody staff since 1997. "Actually, I like the idea working of at the prison and taking my vacation time for these excavation trips."

Camburn, whose basement laboratory is overflowing with evidence of his love for fossil hunting, actually began searching for fossils long before he went to work at Bayside.

"I tried to get my wife interested [in fossil hunting] back in the 1970s," said Camburn, the father of three adult children. "I took her on a few fossil trips, but she didn't care for it. So I waited for her to decide she wanted to do it, and that was in the '80s. The timing was pretty good, because we were able to take the kids on some of these trips. They were true family outings."

In 1988, the Camburns found fossil materials they were unable to identify during a trip in Monmouth County. So they went to the State Museum for help.

"That's how we met David Parris," Camburn pointed out.

Throughout the years, Parris and the Camburns have excavated in such fossil-rich locations as Montana, Wyoming, Texas, Idaho and the Dakotas. They have found specimens ranging from turtles and crocodiles – both dating back roughly 55 million years – to ancient fish and dinosaurs, including, of course, the T-Rex.



Joseph Camburn and his colleagues excavated 10 T-Rex teeth, the largest of which is nearly a foot long.

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Dig It!

"It's exciting discover something tens of millions of years old and to know that you're the first one ever to see it," Camburn said. "It's also nice to know that your discoveries are so important to science. When you make a donation to a museum, your name goes on that specimen. It's a legacy of sorts."

According to Camburn, the list of requirements to become an amateur fossil hunter isn't exactly extensive.

"You have to love the outdoors and not worry about hard work," he reported. "Beyond that, all you really need are a pick, a shovel and a strong back."



Face to Face

Victim-Offender Dialogue Comes to New Jersey Department of Corrections

A meeting that George Pizzo first requested back in 2007 finally materialized on August 17, 2010. That was the day Pizzo made the acquaintance of the woman who was operating the vehicle that struck and killed his daughter, Amber, five years earlier. The driver of the vehicle, Giselle Barquero-Perez, was intoxicated when the fatal accident occurred.

In its aftermath, Barquero-Perez was convicted of vehicular homicide and incarcerated at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.

However unlikely, George Pizzo and Giselle Barquero-Perez met face to face, engaging in a discussion that lasted approximately two hours.

"Not only was the meeting everything I expected it to be, it actually was more than I expected," Pizzo said. "Prior to that, I never truly understood the concept of closure. To me, closure would have been for my daughter to come back. Yet I believe this meeting provided closure for both of us, though obviously on a much different level than I had envisioned. It was as if we were able to get past that chapter in our lives and somehow move on."

Victim-Offender Dialogue programs have evolved during the last 20 or so years to become significant components of the restorative justice and offender reentry processes across the criminal justice system. Both processes are priorities for Gov. Chris Christie and New Jersey Department of Corrections Commissioner Gary Lanigan. However, a Victim-Offender Dialogue never had been undertaken by the NJDOC – until the summer of 2010.

The groundbreaking dialogue was arranged by the department's Office of Victim Services (OVS). According to OVS staff member



James Dorsey, chief of the Office of Victim Services (OVS), is flanked by OVS staff members Anissa Jett (left) and Marguerite Silva.

Photo by Scott Franks

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Anissa Jett, who facilitated the meeting along with fellow staff member Marguerite Silva, "we couldn't have asked for a better pilot case" to launch the program.

For several years, Pizzo has participated as a guest speaker in the OVS Focus on the Victim program, presenting on the topic of drunk and impaired driving victimization. Meanwhile, in April 2009, Barquero-Perez successfully completed a 14-week Focus on the Victim program at Edna Mahan.

"Mr. Pizzo has been the driving force in bringing about the Victim-Offender Dialogue," Silva said. "When he first made the request, we didn't have a program in place. We certainly had an interest in making it happen, but there were so many components, policy issues and safety procedures that needed to be addressed before we could implement a dialogue."

When Silva, Jett and OVS Chief James Dorsey reached out to individuals from other states who have had experience with Victim-Offender Dialogues, they received a similar piece of advice from virtually everyone they consulted.

"We had to be fully prepared for the unexpected," Silva related.

By the time the much-anticipated dialogue arrived, Barquero-Perez was just a few days from completing her sentence, at which time she would be deported to Costa Rica. Nobody – from victim to inmate to staff – knew quite what would transpire.

"At first, it was a little bit awkward for both of us," Pizzo reported. "But then we just started talking. We discussed her incarceration, what it had been like, what her future plans were. She had an opportunity to express her tremendous sense of sorrow, and that's something she needed to do. She asked questions about Amber and the rest of our family. She wanted to try to understand the damage she had done, to personalize it, to put a face on it.

"There are a lot of people in our prisons – a college student, a co-worker, a next-door neighbor – who had been living normal lives until they made the terrible decision to drink and drive," he continued. "That decision turned their lives upside down

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and inside out. That's what I believed, and it helped me to sit with this young woman and have that belief confirmed. This was not an evil person. This was a caring person who made a tragic mistake that she has to live with for the rest of her life. Like me, she is committed to spreading the word about the ramifications of her decision, and that's something I was glad to hear."

Afterwards, Silva and Jett, who witnessed the dialogue along with Edna Mahan Associate Administrator Richard Salvatore, immediately knew they had been part of something special, both professionally and personally.

"It was time-consuming [to arrange], but once it happened, we knew it was well worth the effort," Silva said. "We were gratified to have seen the process begin and then watch it come full circle."

Taking into consideration the amount of preparation required, Silva and Jett are hopeful that future Victim-Offender Dialogues can be held at a rate of one or two per year.

For his part, Pizzo, who admitted that some family members and friends initially opposed his participation in the dialogue, has no regrets.

"I wanted to do this for two reasons," he said. "One was for my own personal needs. The other is that I was very interested in putting together a program that would help others through the healing process. I'm glad to know the program will not be ending with me."



Planting the Seeds for Success

Horticulture Program Prepares Inmates for Life on the Outside

Deborah Mahon's most gratifying moments as a horticulture instructor at Jones Farm often have little to do with landscapes or greenhouses.

"My greatest challenge could be when I have an inmate who can't read," said Mahon, who transferred from Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility to Jones Farm in September 2008.

"I give him a packet of seeds," she continued. "He doesn't need to read the instructions, because there's a picture on the packet. So he can choose which seeds he wants by looking at the pictures. He germinates the seed, and then moves it to a larger pot. Eventually, he puts it out in the garden and watches it grow. If it's a fruit or vegetable, at some point, he can eat it. The process might take a few months, but the inmate is blown away by the fact that he actually was able to grow something he could eat.

"The person comes to realize he can make something of his life by applying himself. That motivates him to learn to read. This isn't a rare experience. In fact, it's not all that unusual."

Like so many other educators employed by the New Jersey Department of Corrections, Mahon's primary objective is to help inmates acquire skills they can utilize as they make the transition from incarceration from freedom. Those skills may range from gardening to flagging and traffic control, from operating heavy equipment to, yes, literacy.



Deborah Mahon's students are taught skills ranging from gardening to operating heavy equipment.

Photo by Scott Franks

"If a student has been in this program for 450-plus hours, he has heard every one of

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Planting the Seeds for Success

my lectures,” related Mahon, who instructs approximately 80 inmates during the course of a year. “In the beginning, they hear about a simple flower. By the end, they’re learning hardscaping – the installation of walls, walkways, etc.”

Along the way, inmates in her program also have an opportunity to become certified operators of forklifts and skid steer loaders (also known as Bobcats).

“One of the first things I do is teach students how to use the heavy equipment,” said Mahon, herself a skilled heavy equipment operator. “Right away, I want them to realize that I’m not just here to talk, that I don’t just teach from a book. Let’s go out and do something hands-on, because this is practical. It’s something that I do and that you can learn to do.”

Inmates who complete 40 hours of on-the-job training and pass a test authorized by the Department of Environmental Protection can become licensed commercial pesticides applicators.

“Eighty-five percent of our students pass the test on their first try,” Mahon reported. “Many of the people in the industry – people who work for extermination companies – have to test two or three times. Our guys understand that there’s money to be made in this industry, so they tend to take their on-the-job training extremely seriously.”

When it comes to actual horticulture, Mahon has the ribbons to document the success of the program at Jones Farm. A graduate of the prestigious Longwood Gardens Professional Gardener Training Program, she has been in the horticulture industry for nearly three decades. For more than half of her pro-



Deborah Mahon instructs offenders in the greenhouse at Jones Farm.

Photo by Scott Franks

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Planting the Seeds for Success

fessional career, she has served as a volunteer for the internationally acclaimed Philadelphia Flower Show, which is held each March at the Philadelphia Convention Center.

Throughout the years, she's encountered countless men and women who have entered their plants and flowers annually yet never received an award. That's why she and her students were so delighted when four of the 10 entries submitted on behalf of the horticulture program at Jones Farm earned ribbons in the 2009 Philadelphia Flower Show. For an encore, the program had 13 entries in the 2010 show and came away with eight ribbons.

The program has had similar success in the Hunterdon County 4-H and Agricultural Fair, which is staged every August in Ringoes.

"There are so many benefits," Mahon said. "First of all, we're demonstrating to our students and everyone else in the Department of Corrections that we have the ability to successfully produce a product. Secondly, it gives the entire community a reason to view this department in a positive light. Furthermore, we are incredibly well received by people in the horticulture industry. People in the industry see their work as a legacy. They're not just growing things to win ribbons. The more that's grown, the better it is for the environment. The idea is to make the world a better place, so the participation of our inmates is welcomed."



Second to None

Ceremonial Unit Represents NJDOC with Distinction

When it comes to law enforcement honor guards throughout the state of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Corrections' Ceremonial Unit has been described as "second to none."

In existence since the inception of the department, the Ceremonial Unit consists of several different components, including color guards – which are comprised of flag bearers and rifle bearers – bagpipers, drummers and buglers.

Each NJDOC facility has its own unit, and in turn, all institutional units combined make up the statewide Ceremonial Unit. The institutional units cover funerals and memorials for active and retired officers from their respective facilities.

"When the institutional ceremonial units go to funerals, it's a show of honor and respect for the family," stated Sergeant William Gooley, the ceremonial unit supervisor at Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility.

Gooley, a 23-year veteran of the NJDOC, has had his share of experience with ceremonial units, in and out of the NJDOC. For 14 years, he has been a member of the Belvidere American Legion Ceremonial Unit, where he currently serves as captain.

"Oftentimes, our presence and support enhances the outlook of family members about their loved ones, and we turn someone's worst day into a positive memory," he added.

For every funeral, each institutional ceremonial unit is in place well before the services are scheduled to commence and visible when loved ones arrive.

"Once the service is over, the family routinely thanks you a million times, and that's what it's all about –



The NJDOC Ceremonial Unit pipe band performs at a Fallen Officers' Memorial ceremony.

Photo by Scott Franks

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supporting the family,” related John Cunningham, director of the Office of Training and coordinator of the Ceremonial Unit.

The statewide Ceremonial Unit covers ceremonies and events on a larger and more public scale. In addition to attending law enforcement memorials throughout New Jersey, including “Blue Masses” and the Police Memorial in Ocean Grove, the statewide unit appears at Correctional Staff Training Academy graduations as well as programs and graduations for other law enforcement agencies. The opening and closing ceremonies of the Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association’s 2010 annual conference and the opening ceremony of the Special Olympics are also among the list of more than 30 events attended by the statewide unit in 2010.

Anyone interested in becoming part of the Ceremonial Unit can volunteer. All an officer needs to do is approach the lieutenant or sergeant in charge of his or her institutional ceremonial unit and express an interest in volunteering.

For Sergeant Dorothy Nuttall of Southern State Correctional Facility, serving on the ceremonial unit is serious business.

“I’m looking for individuals with integrity, who are reliable, caring and strong-willed,” noted the institutional supervisor of three years, who has been with the department since 1993.

“Volunteers must value the NJDOC, because they will be representing the department at all events,” she continued. “I have been proud to serve and represent the department for the 10 years that I’ve been involved with the Ceremonial Unit, and the members of my unit at Southern State are proud as well.”

The need for individuals who are disciplined and who will be dedicated to serving on the Ceremonial Unit cannot be overstated.

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"You have to shine your shoes and make sure that your uniform is impeccable – clean, pressed and ready to go for every event," said Cunningham, who has been involved with the unit for 20 out of his 24 years with the NJDOC.

"An officer can be called today for an event tomorrow. Many times, it's at a moment's notice that we call our people out. As long as you're willing to put your best foot forward and be dedicated to the unit, then that's what's important."

Captain Wayne Manstream of East Jersey State Prison serves as the Ceremonial Unit's detail supervisor. Manstream, a 19-year veteran of the NJDOC, brought his experience as a color guard and a battalion color sergeant with the United States Marine Corps to the Ceremonial Unit when he began volunteering with the unit in 1992.

As coordinator, Manstream's major responsibility is to assemble members of the unit into formation upon their arrival at statewide events.

"A lot of times, our department doesn't get good press, but when the Ceremonial Unit goes to a function, it represents the department in a good light," related Manstream, who also serves as the ceremonial unit supervisor at East Jersey.

"I don't get the job done by myself. It's everyone, from the officers up, working together. The institutional supervisors are great. They are proud of their jobs and extremely committed to making the department look professional. The NJDOC stands toe-to-toe with all the other law enforcement units in the state."

Serving on the Ceremonial Unit, however, can be extremely demanding.

"Both supervisors and officers spend a lot of their own time preparing for and



Members of the NJDOC Ceremonial Unit take part in a Fallen Officers' Memorial ceremony.

Photo by Scott Franks

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attending events, and the required uniform is very expensive,” noted Cunningham. “It’s not about being on the unit in name only, it’s about stepping up when it’s time to step up, and that’s what everyone has done. The officers involved are truly committed to the cause, and the Ceremonial Unit is a great reflection of the professionalism and the dedication of our employees, and the NJDOC as a whole.”



Something Fishy

Southern State Inmates Construct Hundreds of Artificial Reef Balls

The last time Fred Pack went fishing, he didn't have a single catch. Next time, however, he'll have big-time expectations.

Since his most recent fishing expedition, Pack became an inmate at Southern State Correctional Facility, where he was assigned, along with 13 other minimum custody offenders, to a detail that constructs artificial reef balls. Through a program administered by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife, the reef balls are strategically dropped from a moving barge and dispersed over an area of the ocean floor.

The concrete structures, which weigh more than 1,000 pounds apiece, provide habitat for the state's marine life. That, in turn, attracts fisherman – including Pack, once he completes his sentence.

"I've always enjoyed fishing," Pack said. "When I get to go fishing again, I'll go where the reef balls are, so I think I'll do pretty well."

The reef balls are three feet high and four feet wide, with approximately two dozen access holes and a hollow central chamber for fish to swim through. The structures attract such species as lobsters, sea bass and tautog. Among the marine invertebrates likely to be found growing on the concrete base are mussels and barnacles.

According to Alex Siniavsky, an industrial trade instructor who oversees the detail, the inmates began



Alex Siniavsky, an industrial trade instructor, is joined by members of the inmate detail that constructs artificial reef balls.

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Something Fishy

constructing the reef balls back in April. Siniavsky, a New Jersey Department of Corrections employee for 14 years, added that by the time the Division of Fish and Wildlife collected the reef balls in mid-December, an estimated 400 of them had been completed.

The structures subsequently were deployed to the Cape May Reef – one of 15 in the state – which is located 9.1 nautical miles east of Cape May Inlet.

Like the other inmates on the detail, Mark Gero was gratified to be part of the process.

“Not only are we helping out fisherman, but we’re contributing to the environment by providing a place for fish to lay their eggs and to be protected from predators,” he said. “Furthermore, we’re learning how to work with concrete, which could help us find jobs once we leave here.”

Pack nodded in agreement, adding, “This is a detail that everyone wants to be part of. I’ll tell you what: Working with this detail definitely beats working inside [the prison] mopping a floor.”



Inmates at Southern State Correctional Facility constructed an estimated 400 artificial reef balls.



Two Lieutenants, One Family

Bartkowski Reflects on Having One Son in Iraq, the Other in Afghanistan

There was a seven-month period during which Neil Bartkowski, a 27-year-old lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps, was deployed in Afghanistan at the same time his 24-year-old brother, Ryan, a U.S. Army lieutenant, was in a combat zone in Iraq.

Naturally, Mom and Dad – Vicki and Greg Bartkowski – took pride of their sons' service to their country. However, having both children at war understandably heightens a parent's level of concern.

"Those were trying times," said Greg Bartkowski, administrator of New Jersey State Prison and a New Jersey Department of Corrections employee for nearly 33 years. "They were in combat units that went out and actually fired their guns."

"It was especially hard on my wife, because, well, she's their mother," he continued. "Every time the phone rang at home, we'd get a little bit anxious. It was nerve-racking in a lot of different ways, but fortunately, we were able to manage."



New Jersey State Prison Administrator Greg Bartkowski (left) is joined by sons Neil (center) and Ryan.

The Bartkowskis received e-mails from their sons about once a week. Phone calls came approximately every six to eight weeks.

"It was always great to hear from them," Greg Bartkowski said, "but they weren't anxious to talk about what was happening where they were. So I'd end up talking about sports or something. But it didn't really matter what we

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Two Lieutenants, One Family

discussed. The important thing was hearing from them.”

The Bartkowski brothers have safely returned from combat – Neil is stationed at Camp Pendleton in California, Ryan at Fort Stewart in Georgia – although both are likely to be redeployed at some future point.

“When they signed up, they knew what they were getting into,” Greg Bartkowski said. “I never discouraged them from making the decisions they made. There are all kinds of benefits that go with being in the military. I’ve worked with quite a few military guys – guys who were in the National Guard or the Reserves, guys who had retired from the military. They were in their 40s, collecting a pension, and employed by the Department of Corrections, bringing home a nice salary. Of course, during wartime, it’s tough.”

By the time Neil Bartkowski graduated from Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, in 2006, he was married and had a child. He had been in the Army ROTC while at Marshall but withdrew after two years and told his father he wanted to become a Marine after graduation.

Not only did he follow through on his plan to join the Marine Corps, but Dad expects him to parlay his decision into a career. A ground intelligence officer, Neil Bartkowski is in line for a promotion to captain in March 2011.

Younger brother Ryan is a graduate of Clemson University, located in the foothills of South Carolina’s Blue Ridge Mountains. He spent his college years in the Army ROTC and graduated in 2008.

Ryan Bartkowski is a field artillery officer, who, like his brother, is airborne qualified – both are certified to jump out of planes. He returned from Iraq with a Bronze Star, the third-highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of the U.S. armed forces. It was presented to him in recognition of heroic

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Two Lieutenants, One Family

actions while in a combat zone. While in Iraq, where he took part in more than 250 combat missions, he was profiled by Fox News on two different occasions – once while interacting with his platoon, another time while briefing an Iraqi general.

Bartkowski admits that he isn't certain what motivated his sons to become officers in the military.

"I've always believed that 9/11 had something to do with it," he related. "They both were in high school at the time, and being from New Jersey, it certainly hit close to home. I've also thought about the fact that we've always been history buffs. We read a lot about the military and watched shows about the military on the History Channel and other networks.

"This much I do know: I couldn't be any prouder of them than I am. I tell everybody I come in contact with about how my sons are serving our country."

